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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 565th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 23 September 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. MBOI

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Second periodic report of the Russian Federation (continued) ((CRC/C/65/Add.5; CRC/C/Q/RUS/2; HRI/CORE/1/Add.52/Rev.1); written replies of the Government of the Russian Federation to questions in the list of issues [document with no symbol])

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the Russian Federation resumed their places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation to respond to the questions raised by Committee members.

3. Mrs. KARELOVA (Russian Federation), replying to a question from Mrs. Karp on the benefits system, said that the main form of assistance for children with families until August 1999 had been a monthly allowance for each child. However, allowances were currently paid only to families with children whose per capita income put them below the poverty line, as a temporary measure from August until January 2000, when it was hoped to revert to the original system. That measure had been taken because many regions, despite receiving funds from the Federal Government for the purpose, had failed to meet their obligations to children; the Federal Government had therefore been obliged to provide 7 billion roubles to make good that deficiency to families living below the poverty line. It had also decided to conclude an agreement with each region for repayment of their child-benefit debts for the previous period. While financial problems persisted, it was encouraging that arrears in payments of old-age pensions and social welfare grants had been cleared.

4. There was also a new type of benefit for poor families with or without children, for which pilot projects had been launched in three regions with World Bank loans, and it was planned to extend it to the entire country. A third system of benefits targeted needy families at the local and regional levels. Since it varied from region to region, and given the Committee's concern that all children should have the same opportunities to enjoy their rights, the Government would use its regional assistance funds to make provision more equitable. The "Children of Russia" programme included a programme, "Children of the North", under which additional investments were made to provide medical care for children living in small villages in remote areas. The Federal Government also provided assistance with access to clinics for Chernobyl children and those living in other ecologically threatened areas, the cost of which could not be borne exclusively by the regions.

5. To the question concerning the use of international aid for resolving children's problems, she said that numerous monitoring mechanisms were in place. In any event, Russia, at least in the modern era, was perpetually scrutinized by many international organizations. The Federal Government also intended to establish the post of Commissioner for the Rights of the Child. The prerequisites existed in the form of support from the public, non-governmental organizations and the authorities, and currently the political will.

6. In the previous five years, over 2,000 local and regional social service institutions involved with families, women and children had been established. Where federal agencies existed, they focused on training staff for those institutions, although a federal social service and support programme for institutions providing such services to families, women and children had existed since 1993. The regions received assistance from the Federal Government in the form of rehabilitation equipment, specialist training, and education for women, children and families. While efficient complaint mechanisms existed, the delegation agreed that an independent monitoring agency should be created to supplement the existing ones. Complaints against the police were heard by an independent court and there was strict control of the organs of the Office of the Federal Procurator-General. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had recently established a self-monitoring system, closely scrutinizing security within its own system and investigating all complaints of abuse of police authority.

7. A 1998 federal law on the guarantees of the rights of the child established the rights of children in institutions, hospitals and schools to periodic assessment of State services provided for them and of the main indicators of quality of life. The assessment was conducted by authorized bodies, at the request of children or their legal representatives. Pursuant to article 25 of the Convention, under Russian law failure by officials to fulfil requirements adequately or to address any deficiencies entailed legal liability.

8. To the question on the Russian Federation's implementation of the United Nations Convention against Torture, responsibility for the criminal justice system had been transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Justice. Two juvenile correctional facilities had been set up, and the Government had decided to split them into smaller units and locate them nearer to the children's homes in order to facilitate family visits. A bill had been prepared for the elimination of the strict-regime colonies for children and teenagers, which were generally not independent and had been originally intended for adult offenders.

9. There had been two questions concerning sex education for Russian teenagers: one on federal family planning, the other on sex education methods. The "Family Planning" programme was directed mainly at developing a modern system of sex education throughout the Russian Federation. Financing, especially for abortions and other operations, had been allocated to the "Safe motherhood" programme. The idea of sex education in Russian schools had been politicized and had met with fierce criticism from members of the "leftist opposition" in the State Duma and from the Church. The Ministry of Education nonetheless considered it necessary for children to be suitably informed. It was therefore examining textbook content and would accord higher priority to sex education in a course on the main aspects of safe living, as it would to the activities of the country's more than 500 medical and psychological centres. Work was underway for publication of a manual to help parents supply such education, as well as sex-education packages that teenagers could consult in private rather than in large auditoria. For purposes of AIDS and drug abuse prevention, children needed to have a clear view of the dangers they faced.

10. On the question of ethnic minorities, she drew members' attention to the federal National-Cultural Autonomy Act, in which various rights of ethnic minorities were enshrined. Educational services comprised a federal component, as well as a national component which allowed ethnic minorities to preserve their traditions, language and environment. Instruction was currently imparted in 26 of Russia's 75 national languages. Funds for textbooks from the Russian Federal budget were allocated exclusively to schools attended by small ethnic groups of the Far North, so that they would not forget their own language. Measures were also being taken to ensure that they had access to higher and specialized middle education.

11. In response to Mrs. Sardenberg's question concerning the coordinating mechanism, the delegation agreed with the assessment of the national report under discussion as a means of evaluating the status of children and of mobilizing resources for its enhancement. The aforementioned Interdepartmental Commission coordinated the work of all agencies. For example, in the Government's recent debate on the question of preventing law-breaking, its approach had been based on a series of measures previously coordinated by that Commission, apprising the Government of each agency's role when it encountered such phenomena as large numbers of orphans in a given city or region. While the role played by the Ministry of the Interior was less conspicuous than previously, many of its employees still needed to be briefed on ways of dealing with street children, who were required by law to be placed in protection centres. Every effort was made to locate their relatives or place them in foster families if they had been abandoned. There were insufficient institutions dealing with street children, most of whom in Moscow originated in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Government cared for them through the social protection agencies.

12. Concerning the accuracy of the national report submitted, she said that it was not easy to reflect everything pertaining to all the republics and regions in a single document. Since the country would be submitting further reports, it would use the opportunity to supplement earlier information and respond more fully to the Committee's questions. After the drafting of the periodic report, a national plan of action for implementation of the Convention had been established and account would be taken of Committee members' comments and concerns in that context.

13. With regard to disabled or orphaned children, she said there was constant press coverage on the status of children, especially vulnerable children, so that the public was kept informed. With UNICEF assistance, a start had been made in 1999 on monitoring implementation of the Convention, and the services of educators and psychologists were being solicited.

14. In reply to the question concerning the status of girls in rural areas, she said that since children in rural areas were probably more discriminated against than their urban counterparts, a programme for rural schools had been instituted to bring them into line with those in urban areas. In an effort to ensure that the very high statistics for children completing primary and secondary education in Russia should also pertain to vocational and technical education, assistance was being given to enable rural children to enrol. The

problem of prostitution of young girls was no worse in rural than in urban areas; throughout the Russian Federation as a whole immorality was more rife in large cities.

15. Mr. BOYCHENKO (Russian Federation), replying to Mrs. Sardenberg's question concerning the follow-up to the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Russian Federation in June, said the latter had applauded the creation of the special Interdepartmental Commission on Juvenile Affairs, comprising heads of law enforcement agencies and other departments, who met regularly to discuss inter alia ways of reducing sentences and custodial detention. Specific measures had been proposed to take account of the High Commissioner's observations during her talks with Government officials, particularly on the status of disabled children in special homes and the reduction of pre-trial detention. One comment made by the High Commissioner had already been acted upon by the Procurator-General of the Republic: persons in temporary detention, including juveniles, were entitled to be medically examined if there were grounds for thinking that they were being ill-treated. In the context of the High Commissioner's talks with government officials, a draft for the development of human rights education had been signed, an ambitious project covering three years and designed to strengthen national capacity in that area, with particular focus on teacher-training colleges. The intention was to set up a national network of NGOs with a view to adoption of a State human rights education programme.

16. Mrs. KARELOVA (Russian Federation), in response to a question from Mrs. Ouedraogo, said that a subprogramme to address the problem of disabled or invalid children involved the screening of pregnant women among other things, and covered a high percentage of women and children. The problems associated with rural areas and the Far North precluded total coverage, but those were being addressed by the establishment of genetic medical centres in, for the time being, places with inadequate infrastructure. Diagnostic centres had been set up for early detection of the causes of disabilities, so that children's needs could be promptly met.

17. Concerning relations with the families of children in care, she said that they could visit freely and 30 per cent of parents did so. With others, however, who had permanently abandoned their children, links had been severed. A network of centres helped families raise disabled children at home, encouraged caring in mothers and tried to rehabilitate the child or help the mother find work, preferably part-time. Every effort was being made to provide alternative forms of care.

18. In answer to Mr. Rabah's question on the right of children to be heard, she said the Ministry of Education had encouraged educational establishments to make sure that children's views were taken into account. There were 72 regional newspapers and organizations which expressed children's views and some 15 regional television studios allowed children to voice opinions. Children from the age of six upwards might be invited by magistrates to attend judicial proceedings accompanied by family representatives and from the age of 10 onwards could have their views conveyed by a legal representative. She recognized that those measures did not yet go far enough and the Ministry of Education was planning to establish regional children's rights offices.

19. Corporal punishment was prohibited in all educational establishments. It was of course impossible to state categorically that it was not inflicted, but councils had been set up recently by presidential decree that would enable speedy action to be taken by the school administration if cases of corporal punishment did occur.

20. The situation of children in Chechnya was unclear at present, since the territory had not recently submitted any information whatever to the federal authorities. The latter were still fulfilling their obligations by paying out child benefits to Chechnya, although the benefits did not always reach those entitled to receive them. The Russian Federation was trying to respond positively to all requests for assistance for children in that region. All requests from the Chechnya authorities for children to receive health care in centres in the Russian Federation had been granted. Such care included operations and care for the disabled or for those injured during military conflict. She undertook to send further information to the Committee as it was received.

21. There was a great deal of information regarding minors in educational colonies, State farms and other such institutions, which would be better transmitted to the Committee in writing.

22. Mr. DOEK, referring to the Government's reply to question 17 on the list of issues, asked what the difference between "foster families" and "receiving families" was. With regard to the reform of alternative care, he asked whether the Government had any major programme to deinstitutionalize child protection and develop the system of foster care and adoption.

23. Referring to the Government's reply to question 16, he said that an annual increase of 70 per cent in intercountry adoptions was rather worrying. According to information received, some 100,000 children were available for adoption in the Russian Federation. There was also information about the possibility of abuse of intercountry adoption schemes, particularly in the form of payment being made for Russian Federation children who then went to western countries. What measures were being taken to prevent that practice? More generally, what was being done to promote the adoption of children within the Russian Federation itself?

24. He noted from the reply to question 6 that the President of the Russian Federation placed a high priority on the prevention of child neglect. How much money had been allocated to the programme to combat neglect; what bodies were involved in implementing the programme; and what measures were being taken to prevent child neglect, which seemed to be a major problem in the Russian Federation?

25. With regard to children with disabilities, he asked what was being done to increase their access to regular education, the rate of which was still very low.

26. He noted that unaccompanied refugee children were allowed access to health and education only if they had refugee or displaced person status. He wondered how that was defined and whether the Russian Federation planned to change that regulation in any way. It seemed from article 16 of the federal

law on citizenship that any child on Russian Federation territory whose parents were both unknown had Russian nationality. To what extent did that apply to unaccompanied children who had fled to the Russian Federation?

27. Regarding child labour, he said there was information to suggest that, as a result of the economic crisis, children found themselves obliged to work to generate income and trade unions feared that the numbers of working children might increase as a result. Was the Government aware of that development and did it have plans to prevent it?

28. Ms. EL-GUINDI asked what measures were being taken to regulate adoption putting the best interests of the children first. With regard to health, information showed that the mortality rate for under-fives had not improved in recent years and that the 1995 national nutrition survey showed that 4 per cent of that group of children were suffering from malnutrition. In 1998, more than twice as many children had been found to be suffering from tuberculosis than in 1991, and there had been a 6.6 per cent increase in the number of children suffering from tuberculosis between 1997 and 1998. She wondered therefore what measures were being taken to protect the resources allocated for children's health care from the impact of budget cuts.

29. Ms. KARP said that her earlier question had concerned not a monitoring system but the possibility of international technical assistance in relation to disabled children, under article 23, paragraph 4 of the Convention. An exchange of information from other experiences might be of great importance to the Russian Federation as it went about building new institutions.

30. She noted with satisfaction that social services were becoming more family- and community-based, particularly counselling services, with the aim of dealing with children in the way envisaged in the Convention, namely through dialogue. She wondered what measures were being taken to combat domestic violence against women, for example through public campaigns encouraging women to report incidents. According to a recent BBC television programme, Russian women did not complain about domestic violence, because they saw it as normal. Domestic violence had a destructive psychological effect on children, and she wondered what structures existed to empower women in that regard: were there special police investigators who took women's complaints seriously? How was society dealing with the problem?

31. It was important to remember that treating neglected children or juvenile delinquents was not the same as treating the victims of sexual abuse. Did victims of sexual abuse, particularly abuse within the family receive professional treatment? Were there any special court procedures for hearing children's complaints and helping them to give evidence? In short, had multidisciplinary methods been developed to deal with sexual abuse?

32. In its written replies, the Russian Federation had reported that accession to the Hague Convention on the abduction of children might be against Russian law, since it was not an offence for one parent to take custody of a child. The child had, however, the right to a relationship with both parents and abduction by one parent violated that right. How did the Criminal Code formalize that aspect of children's rights?

33. She understood that the responsibility for education had been shifted from the Ministry of Education to parents and that the school drop-out rate had subsequently increased. Was there any intention to reconsider that allocation of responsibility, particularly in view of the fact that, at a time of economic crisis, families might prefer children to go to work? How did the Government protect children so that they could continue their education?

34. With regard to the juvenile justice system, she said that, although as a general rule nobody could be detained for more than 48 hours before trial, there was a Presidential Decree that allowed detention incommunicado for up to 30 days and she wondered if that applied to children also. She requested clarification of the situation whereby it was the judge who decided on detention but the prosecutor who decided on pre-trial detention and appeals. She welcomed the new law on sentencing but she wondered whether the Russian Federation had established mechanisms to make it possible to pass alternative or conditional sentences such as probation. If so, to what extent were such mechanisms generalized?

35. She pointed out that, although 11 to 14 year olds were not criminally liable, they could be subject to administrative detention imposed by educational institutions rather than courts. She wondered whether there were any plans to deal with that aspect in forthcoming legislation, since children's rights were violated if they were deprived of their liberty other than by the courts. In addition, she asked whether any time limit had been set for establishing the special juvenile court. She wondered whether a target date had been set for the reform of education or whether priorities and procedures still had to be decided. Lastly, she asked whether there was any national plan of action to implement the Agenda for Action of the World Congress against Commercial Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in 1996.

36. Mr. RABAH asked whether there were any special detention centres for children and whether police departments worked together with NGOs involved in protecting juveniles. Were there any rehabilitation centres to reform offenders, with the involvement of social workers or teachers, or any post-release care scheme? He also wondered whether there was any system of legal aid and, lastly, whether there were any statistics on street children; was that an issue or a phenomenon in the Russian Federation and how were they protected?

37. Ms. SARDENBERG said that sexual exploitation in rural areas was of particular importance. The phenomenon was usually an urban one but unemployment in rural areas forced some children into prostitution at 12 or 13 years of age. The Committee was encouraged by the strong stand being taken in public awareness and the media, but what was really happening? How many investigations were made? There were so many institutions involved - institutions for the disabled, education colonies and State farms - not to mention different ministries. The Convention should be able to provide the answers - not just in terms of measures and reform but also a change in attitude. The institutions themselves represented a central issue in the area of child rights in the Russian Federation: their purpose was clear but they were not in keeping with the spirit of the Convention or with modern research on child development.

38. Ms. TIGERSTEDT said that the report had given further detail on drugs, alcohol and related crime. The penalties for introducing children to drugs and alcohol had been increased and anti-alcohol propaganda circulated in schools. But rehabilitation and treatment were still inadequate. Were there any supportive or preventive measures to help families before children were taken by the authorities or went on the streets? Had any studies been carried out on alcohol abuse? She also wondered whether there were any NGOs like Alcoholics Anonymous to provide individual support or support to help families stay together.

39. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO said she would like to know what measures were being taken to limit children's access to the Internet as a means of protecting them against paedophile and pornographic networks. The high rate of abortion in the Russian Federation was no doubt a threat to women's reproductive health; were women being educated about family planning to discourage them from resorting to abortion as a means of contraception?

40. Considering the failure of the breastfeeding programme and the absence of legislation in that connection, and bearing in mind the possible harm the heavily advertised milk substitutes might pose to children's health, what was the Government doing to address that situation? Also, were students being taught about accident prevention in an effort to stem the high occurrence of accidents among young people? Begging seemed to be on the increase; had the Government taken any steps to protect children against that practice?

41. Mrs. KARELOVA (Russian Federation) said that, in the absence of legal definitions of prostitution and pornography or a special department devoted to those issues, it was difficult to evaluate the scope of the problem if indeed, it did exist. Figures for cases of venereal diseases, sexual violence and child prostitution were admittedly high but had to be assessed against the considerable size of the total population. The Russian Interpol office had provided information which confirmed the prostitution of minors via the Internet. However, the Government had been offered international assistance to combat the problem.

42. Violence against girls was continually rising. In the case of women, as they were still reticent about that kind of abuse, it was difficult for law enforcement officials to deal with the problem. The decision had been taken to set up crisis centres in each region, especially for women and children who suffered domestic violence, which although small in number were staffed by trained professionals. The Committee would be provided later with information regarding court proceedings instituted against alleged perpetrators of violence against women.

43. An international agreement with the United States, France, Great Britain and Canada had been reached at the conclusion of a conference on rape by family members, held under the joint patronage of President Yeltsin and Mrs. Hillary Clinton.

44. Turning to the correctional system, which fell within the mandate of the Ministry of Justice, she said some centres offered vocational training and

opportunities for some occupational activity. There were also possibilities for visits from family members and non-governmental organizations, and sports facilities were sometimes provided.

45. The CHAIRPERSON reminded the delegation of the outstanding questions that remained unanswered.

46. Mrs. CHEPURNYKH (Russian Federation) indicated the number of children adopted as well as those who had been placed in educational institutions or foster homes and said that the Government gave priority to parents for the care of their children. However, where that was not possible, the next appropriate measure was implemented.

47. A federal data bank had been set up to monitor children who had been either taken into care or adopted. Of the total number, 10 per cent were under 6 years of age and the others were aged up to 18 years. Most people were extremely secretive about adoption and preferred to adopt children of 2 years and under. The wait could be very long. Some people would make contact with pregnant women; others would go to a different town to adopt a child to prevent people from knowing that the child had been adopted. As a result, it was very difficult for older children to be adopted. They could be placed in institutions, foster homes or back in their own families but funding remained an obstacle, especially as the Government tried to grant the same funding to families as to other forms of care. Adoption was based on a court decision handed down in the geographical area where the child was resident. However, because there had been cases of illegal adoptions, new legislation had been passed to monitor the licencing of adoption agencies.

48. As a result of the economic crisis in 1998, the number of abandoned children had increased, whereas the number of adoptions had fallen drastically. In light of the Government's inability to cope with child benefit payments, new legislation had been passed to make parents more liable for the financial support of their children.

49. The system for selecting adoptive parents was quite thorough, involving the submission of a considerable number of documents and an examination of the income, housing and health situation of the prospective adoptive parents. As regards the custody of children when one of the parents lived in a foreign country, the decision rested with the courts as to where the child should live. When they reached the age of 18, children were free to make their own choice in that regard. Furthermore, the other parent enjoyed an equal right to be heard in court.

50. As to special education for children with disabilities, a significant number were either placed in specialized schools, such as schools for the blind, deaf or mentally retarded, or in ordinary schools with a special support system. However, more needed to be done for children with Down's syndrome and children who were seriously mentally retarded. Parents of children with special needs had been left the choice as to whether their children attended a special school or an ordinary school. Access to higher education had been improved and the number of pre-university colleges had

risen to 20. The Government was aware of the inadequacy but hoped that more children would be able to benefit from the choice of home-based education, mainstream education or special schools.

51. Hardly any problems arose with regard to the education and health care of the children of refugees and internally displaced persons, because the determining factor was the child's place of residence. However, there were a few cities, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, which required further attention in that regard.

52. Education was compulsory for the first nine years of schooling, which were completed by the vast majority of children. A considerable percentage even went on to pursue secondary education or vocational training. In September 1999, a census had been taken of children in the whole of the Russian Federation, which had revealed that a large number of children did not attend school for lack of means. Consequently, measures had been introduced to assist needy families. It was hoped that legislation on the minimum school age would be amended by 2000.

53. There were also centres for children with deviant behaviour. After three years, if their behaviour was acceptable, the children could be transferred to ordinary schools. In addition, the former closed educational institution had been replaced by an open type where juveniles could interact with other children and even spend time at home, in an attempt to make the system more humane.

54. With regard to educational reforms, the 12-year school system would not be introduced for a further 8 years, in order to allow time for texts to be prepared and for teachers to be retrained.

55. Mrs. KARELOVA (Russian Federation) said that child labour was a serious source of concern for the Government. A study by a labour market research institute had furnished statistics of the worst forms of child labour, including prostitution, begging, work at gas stations and on the streets and in agriculture. A large number of juveniles were gainfully employed by friends and other adults without going through the normal channels for temporary work. Information in that connection could be submitted to the Committee if necessary. Mortality rates continued their downward trend for children of all categories, although they were still relatively high. Foreign technical assistance was extended to the Russian Federation in the context of cooperation projects with a large number of agencies, in addition to bilateral agreements.

56. Replying to the question on the length of pre-trial detention periods, the Government was aware that those periods were sometimes too lengthy and that was one of the objectives of the reforms. With respect to substance abuse, anonymous services existed, although not many. The problem was also being dealt with unofficially but measures were being taken to give official status to those services to enhance their efficiency.

57. Mrs. Karp had asked about the possibility of establishing a single structure for the development of social services. Within the Ministry of Labour and Social Development there was a department dealing with matters

related to family, women and children's affairs, which did indeed play a coordinating role for social services provided to those groups. As for the question relating to the Internet, she was not in a position to provide detailed information. However, because the Internet had generally not developed extensively in Russia, no normative measures had yet been adopted to protect children from exposure to pornography. Nonetheless, her delegation had taken note of the comments of Committee members and would take them into consideration for the future. The number of abortions was decreasing, but was still very high. The authorities were conscious of the importance of the problem.

58. Mr. DOEK asked what was meant by "socially dangerous acts" when referring to crimes. The term would appear to be similar to offences qualified as "status offences", for example in the United States, whereby a child's disorderly behaviour was treated as a crime. What exactly was covered by that concept?

59. The Government of the Russian Federation was apparently not considering the ratification of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction of 1980. The office of the public prosecutor had issued an opinion against ratification. The international abduction of children was a serious problem, and required effective measures. Above all, it should be made clear to parents that such acts would not be tolerated. What was the reason the Russian Government had not ratified the Convention?

60. Mrs. EL GUINDI asked for an explanation regarding the fact that some 55 per cent of teachers in small primary schools had not received higher education.

61. Mrs. KARP said that she had received a letter of complaint from women living in Omsk who had not received child allowances for over one year. How did the Government plan to deal with the problem of arrears in the payment of child allowances?

62. Mrs. SARDENBERG drew the attention of the delegation to the importance of the active participation of children in institutions. Were there any specific mechanisms allowing children to take part in discussions about neglect, abuse and ill-treatment?

63. Mrs. CHEPURNYKH (Russian Federation), replying to an earlier question, said that a "receiving family" was one which accommodated a number of children in a family setting. The use of receiving families was quite extensive throughout the country. On the other hand, "foster families" were quite new to the Russian Federation, and were limited to a few pilot projects in Moscow and five other regions. In such cases the child's institution made a financial contribution to the family in question to assist with the upbringing of the child. In devising a method of assigning children to such homes with a guarantee of minimum standards, the authorities were relying heavily on the experience of the British foster system.

64. The lack of juvenile justice legislation was a very serious shortcoming of the Russian legal system, and one which needed to be addressed in the near future. For the time being juvenile justice cases were handled in various

ways. For example, a particular magistrate could be assigned the task of dealing with juvenile or family matters. Under a system set up in the Lyubertsy district near Moscow, specific juvenile courts heard cases, but that system was still in an experimental stage.

65. With regard to the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Education, the Interior and Labour and Social Development had all supported ratification, and it was only the prosecutor's office that still had doubts. Because 1999 was an election year, chances of ratification in the near future were slim. However, the members of the Committee should rest assured that the matter would be pursued by the ministries concerned, and the Convention would probably be submitted to the Duma following the elections. The Duma would then have to take the final decision based on the cases made respectively by the ministries and the prosecutor's office.

66. Under the new amendments to the Criminal Code, children could be sent to special schools only under a court order, and no longer on the sole basis of a decision by the commission on juvenile affairs.

67. While the majority of teachers in small primary schools had received specialized secondary education, most teacher training in the Russian Federation took place at university level, and it was hoped that in the next five years teacher training programmes would be restructured so that not only all general school teachers, but also all instructors in specific subjects would receive a university education.

68. Survival techniques, accident prevention and first aid were taught in Russian schools right from kindergarten. In addition, each school had a medical service, which carried out preventive measures and upheld standards to prevent illnesses and accidents in the institution.

69. Mrs. KARELOVA (Russian Federation) said that victims of sexual exploitation received psychological and medical attention and instruction at all 700 social centres in the country. In addition, there were the 37 crisis centres that had been set up in the various regions, which received both women and children subjected to violence. Over 1,000 social refuges existed for the homeless, and all were part of the social services system. Children could be held for offences in temporary isolation centres run by the Ministry of the Interior for up to two months, and in exceptional cases the prosecutor's office could extend the stay still further.

70. Breastfeeding was, of course, promoted by gynaecologists and other medical specialists. While no financial incentives were provided, support was given in the form of explanations of the medical and affective importance of breastfeeding. A UNICEF programme was under way to develop more ways of promoting breastfeeding.

71. Mr. BOYCHENKO (Russian Federation) said that the term "socially dangerous offence" was basically equivalent to the terms "offence" or "crime", and in actual fact did not reflect any kind of judgement with respect to social or anti-social behaviour.

72. Mrs. CHEPURNYKH (Russian Federation), referring to children's participation, said she could not provide information on the situation in such institutions as isolation centres. However, she acknowledged that there could be more and better participation in certain other institutions, such as refuges and boarding schools, and that it might be advisable to involve NGOs in setting up such mechanisms.

73. Mrs. KARELOVA (Russian Federation) added that refuges and boarding schools for mentally or physically handicapped children had no mechanism for the representation of children on their councils. As for the arrears in the payment of child allowances, she had earlier acknowledged that the problem of delayed payments was encountered throughout the country. The delegation was prepared to take note of the situation of the families concerned and to try to help them recover their dues.

74. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to make preliminary observations following the discussion with the delegation of the Russian Federation.

75. Mrs. KARP said she wished to express words of encouragement to all those who were working to strengthen the rights of the child in the Russian Federation, which was undergoing a painful and long period of restructuring and faced a serious economic crisis. The country was on the right track in establishing new institutions.

76. The discussion with the delegation had been very fruitful, and the Committee's Concluding Observations, which should be seen as a continuation of a constructive process of dialogue, would certainly reflect the points raised. It was heartening that the delegation acknowledged the problems facing the country, and especially that its members were aware of many of the measures that were needed, for example in the legislative field. Of course, the appropriation of budgetary support and the allocation of manpower resources were also needed. She trusted that the delegation would publish an account of its discussion with the Committee, and hoped that the Government would report in 2000 on the progress achieved in the meantime.

77. Mrs. SARDENBERG thanked the delegation for its enormous effort, through which it had provided a great deal of information. The Convention had an extremely democratic perception of the child in society, and it would be very beneficial indeed if the Russian Federation took a stand to put children's rights onto the national agenda. The Government should be encouraged in particular to address the issue of children's participation in institutions, which appeared to be a subject requiring immediate action.

78. Mr. RABAH said that his concern was with the lack of a juvenile justice system. The Committee had requested additional information on the establishment of such a system in 1993, but still no appropriate legislation had been adopted. Hopefully, Russian children would not have to wait another five years for such legislation, which was extremely important. Incarcerating

children in adult institutions was tantamount to sending them to schools of crime. The report and discussion had been extremely useful and positive, and he wished the members of the delegation every success in their work on behalf of Russian children.

79. Mrs. KARELOVA (Russian Federation) said she was pleased with the useful exchange of ideas with the Committee members. Her delegation understood that the Russian Government had made some progress, but that a lot more remained to be done. Drawing up policy for the rights of the child was an extremely difficult, ongoing process which took time, especially where the adoption of legislation was concerned. The constructive dialogue engaged with the Committee would very much help the Government in its future work.

The meeting rose at 6.00 p.m.